



NEWS RELEASE

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ORANGE COUNTY HEALTH PROVIDERS AND ADVOCATES FORM COALITION TO PRESERVE PROP 10 PROGRAMS

In response to Governor Jerry Brown's proposed raid of Prop 10/First 5 Children and Families Commission funds, community leaders are taking action to save the lives of the most vulnerable children in the County by forming an advocacy coalition to ensure the children of Orange County have a voice to be reckoned with in Sacramento.

SANTA ANA – Friday, February 25, 2011, The Coalition of Orange County Community Health Centers (“The Coalition”) convened local community leaders concerned about the impact that the Governor’s proposed raid of Children and Families Commission funds under Prop 10 would have on local children’s health services. The meeting was announced only the day before but there was standing room only in the meeting held at OneOC.

Michael Ruane, Executive Director of the Orange County Children and Families Commission, provided the devastating update from Sacramento with his outline of the Governor’s proposal to remove an estimated two-thirds of the money reserved to fund children’s services in the County. Significant points noted by Ruane were that about 800 Orange County jobs are funded by prop 10 dollars and in addition to the State proposal, the Feds are also proposing steep cuts to children’s health and education programs—cuts that private foundations will not be able to backfill. The feeling throughout the room was grim.

When the Governor first released his proposed budget in January, he originally wanted to hold a special election in June to allow voters to decide whether or not to approve the 1 billion dollar raid of Prop 10 funds (which would be 50 million from Orange County), a tactic that had been used in 2009 and failed. According to Ruane, as of last week, the legislature is now in discussion about removing the monies without putting it on the ballot in June. The Governor would like to have this approved by the legislature by March 10th.

Isabel Becerra, CEO of the Coalition, who led the meeting, proposed forming a coalition to advocate for preserving Prop 10 funds, “It is important for our elected officials to understand the immense impact that the loss of these funds will have on the health and well-being of children throughout the County—especially children living in poverty and homelessness in central OC. If we pool our resources to speak with one voice, we can have a greater impact.”

The most important take away from the event was that the proposed raid of Prop 10 funds would mean a loss of over two-thirds of the funds from the Orange County Children and Families Commission, which could result in the loss of nearly 70 percent of health and educational services provided to children 0-5, pregnant mothers and their families throughout the County.

Healthy Smiles for Kids of Orange County is one of the many vital programs funded by the Orange County Children and Families Commission. CEO, Liz Bear, was in attendance and stated, “We touch the lives of 30,000 children, of all ages, each year. Losing Prop 10 funding will result in the cessation of services to at least one third of those children and families. It is disturbing that the legislature may take these dollars without putting it on the ballot for the public.” According to Bear, “Orange County children entering kindergarten have less tooth decay today (17%) than five years ago (30%). This significant improvement is due to the education of children and families, prevention and early intervention activities funded with Prop 10 dollars.”

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About The Coalition:

The Coalition of Orange County Community Health Centers is a consortium of safety net providers and key partners creating quality healthcare for vulnerable, underserved communities. For 34 years, the Coalition has served as a membership organization for freestanding, mobile community based non-profit clinics offering a forum in which clinic leaders can share ideas and concerns, as well as to advocate for the clinics and their patients. The Coalition currently represents 22 member clinic organizations with over 65 clinic locations throughout Orange County.